



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

# News Release

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## **IRANIAN PLEADS GUILTY IN MONEY LAUNDERING / ARMS PLOT TO EXPORT U.S. FIGHTER JET COMPONENTS TO IRAN *Man Sought to Purchase \$380,000 Worth of Military Goods for Iran***

BALTIMORE, MD – Allen F. Loucks, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, and Cynthia O’Connell, Special Agent-in-Charge for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Baltimore, today announced that **Abbas Tavakolian**, age 58, of Tehran, Iran pleaded guilty before U.S. District Court Judge Richard D. Bennet to attempted exportation of aircraft parts and components for the U.S. F-4 Phantom and F-14 Tomcat fighter jet aircraft to Iran, and money laundering.

According to the agreed upon statement of facts presented to the court, Tavakolian attempted to export munitions list items from the United States to the Republic of Iran that are controlled by the Department of State, specifically aircraft parts and components for F-4 the F-14 fighter jet aircraft, without first having obtained the necessary license for such exportation.

Tavakolian contacted undercover agents by electronic mail and telephone conversations to acquire military-use technology from the United States for use by the Iranian military. The Munitions List technology sought by Tavakolian included gunnery system components for F-4 and F-15 fighter jet aircraft.

One such component was the M61A1 Vulcan six barrel, rotary action, “inner drum” which was essential to feed ammunition into the multi-barrel ‘gattling gun’ of the offensive weapon of the fighter jet aircraft. Tavakolian sought 100 of these “inner drums.”

On June 2, 2004, Tavakolian met with undercover agents in Europe to obtain an “inner drum.” On July 20, 2004, Tavakolian sent \$5,980 via wire transfer from Panama as a down payment for the purchase of the “inner drums” and other embargoed and prohibited items. A second down payment of \$4,000 was wired and on September 16, 2004, and an additional \$10,000 was wired to the undercover agents.

Tavakolian subsequently agreed to meet with undercover agents in the South Pacific and acquire the items for shipment to Iran, for a total cost of approximately \$380,000. Tavakolian agreed to deliver 25 percent of the cost when he took delivery of the items.

On December 10, 2004, Tavakolian arrived in the South Pacific from the Republic of Iran. He subsequently met with undercover agents and examined the “inner drum” and other U.S. Munitions List and prohibited items compiled at the request of the undercover agents.

Satisfied that the items were in order, Tavakolian directed ICE agents to fill out paperwork for DHL delivery services for the shipment of the items to Tehran. He also directed the undercover ICE agents to label the items as agricultural equipment in order to disguise the true nature of the items.

Tavakolian then paid undercover agents \$100,000 in United States currency and compensated them for the DHL shipping costs. Tavakolian was present when a DHL representative took custody of the items. ICE agents subsequently intercepted and took custody of the items.

On December 11, 2004, Tavakolian was arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS) agents and taken into federal custody after another meeting with undercover agents in which Tavakolian sought to acquire several complete F-14 fighter aircraft for future shipment to Iran.

Under the terms of the plea agreement, the parties have agreed to ask the court to sentence Tavakolian to 46 to 57 months in prison. Tavakolian remains in federal custody pending sentencing scheduled for Wednesday, July 6, 2005 at 2:30 PM.

United States Attorney Allen F. Loucks stated that, “Preventing the illegal export of military technology has long been a priority for the Office. The need to prevent the export of military technology has only become heightened in recent years. It demands the unique attention and substantial resources of federal state and local law enforcement to bring cases like this one to address this threat.”

Cynthia O’Connell, Special Agent-in-Charge for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Baltimore, stated that, “In the post 9/11 world, keeping sensitive U.S. weapons technology from falling into the wrong hands has never been more important. This case clearly demonstrates the importance of aggressive export enforcement, given the military items involved in this plot and their intended destination.”

Joseph McMillan, Special Agent-in-Charge for the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), Baltimore, stated that, “Our military technology provides our warfighters with the edge to fight and win conflicts. It is vital that we use available resources in a collaborative way to thwart the illegal transfer and diversion of our strategic technology to proscribed nations and individuals that pose a threat to our National Security.”

This case was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, and the Baltimore Police Department. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney James G. Warwick.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*